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Washington MERRY-GO-ROUND

By Drew Pearson

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—Gradually the story of the three Fields who disappeared so mysteriously behind the Iron Curtain in 1949 is beginning to unfold.

For three years not a word has been heard of Noel Field, former State Department official and European relief worker who went to Czechoslovakia in May 1949 and dropped out of sight.

He disappeared from his Prague hotel, though later he wired the hotel to keep his clothes, and on July 12 a man named Rene Kimel collected his things and paid his hotel bill.

On Aug. 22, 1949, his brother Herman boarded a plane in Warsaw, en route to Czechoslovakia. He disappeared.

Only this week did the Austrian Communist newspaper "Volksstimme" admit what long had been suspected—that the Fields had been arrested.

Meanwhile, on August 3, Noel Field's German-born wife went to Prague to look for him, but disappeared on August 17. Following this, Field's adopted daughter, Erika Glazer-Walach, went from Washington to Berlin, reportedly was met by Leo Bauer, editor of the Soviet controlled Berlin radio, and has never been heard from since.

For three years, State Department queries have received a blank stare from the Communists, and the world has not known whether the Fields were Communists, American agents against communism, spies or what.

Moscow Feared Field

However, with the recent Czech spy trials, an explanation gradually unfolds: Moscow had to get Noel Field out of the way before it brought charges against the alleged traitors in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Otherwise Field would have denied the evidence. Consequently, he was enticed into Czechoslovakia and arrested four months before the first trial began.

For many of the Communists now on trial were Field's friends. He had known them when they were refugees in western Europe and when he was helping them as a relief worker for the Unitarian Service Committee.

Field, it appears, had been a Communist. Whether he remained one is not known. Testimony regarding his Communist connections was brought out in the Hiss trial; while Humbert Droz, President of the 1942, stated in an interview

with E. F. Gonda that Field was under Communist orders to take care of Communist refugees and arrange for their repatriation to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Russia.

He was also instructed by Moscow to put them in touch with the OSS, the American wartime undercover service, then operating in Europe. Field had worked with Allen Dulles, OSS chief in Switzerland, during the height of the war and had helped get valuable information from Germany through German Communists. And in 1945, he came to Paris with a letter from Dulles to Capt. Arthur Schlesinger of the OSS, now a Harvard professor and more recently on Adlai Stevenson's staff.

Field tried to persuade Schlesinger to make use of his Communist proteges through the OSS. However, Schlesinger informs me that he was suspicious, did not see why the United States should subsidize a group of Communist exiles, and rejected Field's offer.

This is important. For on this turns the crux of the present spy trials in Czechoslovakia and the previous trials in Hungary.

After the war ended, Field was given the job of arranging for the Communist refugees to return to their countries.

The Communist exiles whom Field befriended went back to eastern Europe became the leaders of their countries. They were Communists, but they were not Russian Communists. And to many of them, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, rather than Russia, came first.

Therefore, when Moscow began to call for more military support, more wheat, more supplies from the satellites, many of these leaders chafed.

Moscow, meanwhile, was depressing satellite economy and simultaneously building up Russian economy at satellite expense. The more this happened, the more Titoism spread.

That is the chief reason for the trials of Slansky, Clementis, and Foreign Minister Rjak in Hungary.

Rjak was the first to be tried in August, 1949, on the charge, among other things, of conspiring with the American "spy" Noel Field. Before that charge was made, the Kremlin knew that Field had to be put away. For Field, though a Communist, was an idealist who was souring on Moscow's ruthlessness and who, if left in the free world, might talk.

Field may still talk. He may be called on as a witness in this or a future spy trial. But if so it will doubtless be under the same circumstances that Robert Vogeler testified in Hungary, and that most witnesses have testified in these weird Soviet trials after subjection to terrorist tactics.